

Moonlight

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Moonlight

by [curiouscannibal](#)

Summary

"I used to feel broken, but not anymore. The white light of the moonlight... it puts me together like glue. I can break and put myself back together again; put my claws and my fangs away."

Will Graham, after getting out of that damned cell in the Baltimore State Hospital, finds things slowly go in strange directions for him and his experience with his own body. No one else seems to be noticing this or understand what's going on other than Hannibal, who seems to know far more about what the issue is than even Will himself. But Will can practically smell something wrong with Hannibal, and it isn't just that he's the Chesapeake Ripper.

It's that he's a monster in the most literal way possible.

Moonlight was the thing that simultaneously held Will together and made him feel like ripping himself apart.

Contained in the prison cell like an animal, he glued his stare to the sink across from where he sat on the brick-hard bed. It was the infuriatingly artificial overhead light that reminded him just vaguely of the moonlight that he hadn't seen in days, having been arrested and imprisoned on accusations of murder. It was hard to fathom he'd killed five people, but it was terrifyingly plausible, to some extent, that he might've actually killed and eaten Abigail. He knew it could, by some psychic insight, be true, because Will knew more than most about what lurked beneath his own skin.

It was a darkness that was visible clearest under the scrutiny of the moonlight, which drew him towards it with a desire for understanding. Not necessarily even from the light itself, but a desire for self-understanding. He'd realized this after coming to terms with the fact he'd started sleepwalking just a few weeks ago. If even that long ago, he was so unsure of his concept of time lately, whether he was losing it to illness or it was being taken from him-- he really couldn't say. Only the moonlight was the same no matter what night, unless it was cloudy and hidden from sight. When it shined brightest he'd awaken in the clearing outside his house, clad in whatever he wore to bed, sweaty as he usually was when emerging from his nightmares.

Even though he'd wanted to just head back inside, to go back to bed and check on his dogs-- each time it happened he couldn't help lingering in the atmosphere for just a few moments longer. Each time it happened he stayed for more seconds than the last, until it eventually got to a point where if he knew the moon would be bright that night, he'd bring a number of blankets out to his porch and sit with his knees to his chest, staring at it until it sang him an invisible lullaby of comfort.

He never had nightmares those nights.

As it was right now, staring at the porcelain white sink dashed with grime not dissimilar to the texture of the moon, he felt his breathing quicken out of a sudden anxiety. His back, mouth, and hands ached, trying to let his muscles relax to no avail. It reached a point where he felt his eyes widen when he sensed the anxiety morph into raw fear; ripping the stupid uniform off of his top half to run his hands down his back with sweaty fingertips. The sensations channeled through his fingers were ones of hair, or fur, as though he were running his hands atop his curls without diving them into the voluminous depths of his hair.

He felt everything ache even further, and scratched into his back to try and make the hirsute experience stop but it wouldn't. Clenching his teeth together was the only way he knew to hold back a groan of frustration and helplessness, devoid of any idea of how to make it all stop. How to make it all just *go away*.

Letting himself fall forward onto the refreshing cold of the floor, Will squeezed his skull with both his hands to try and make some kind of distraction, but it just made him feel dizzy and his vision went blurry. The deluded inmate squirmed on the ground, losing track of what was happening until he passed out in the experience of a living nightmare.

Except, the traces of it remained even when he was forced awake by irritated guards, forcing him to put his clothes back on as they deposited his breakfast without much care. He'd glanced around the walls and saw scratches that absolutely weren't there before he'd passed out after the fit, and could only feel his heart race in response to it. They were covered with marks of three diagonal lines crossing over another three that were slashed in the opposite direction.

 Will Graham and 3x3 slash symbol

Will glanced at his nails-- a little brittle by the edges, but longer than he remembered them being. It spurred him into biting them, finding he was causing his cuticles to bleed far quicker than he usually did. Running his fingers by his teeth grazed them enough to give faintly red welts, and to irritate the skin.

He wasn't sure what to make of this information.

A Mona Lisa-esque smile not present in this particular memory of the BSHCI was showcased as a response, making up for his negatively furrowed brows and downturned lips of Will's present expression.

"It sounds as though you are experiencing a case of lycanthropy, Will." His mind finally returned to reality, as though breaking the surface of murky depths of the ocean to gasp for air. Eyes slowly moved up from their current staring at the floor and made contact with the psychiatrist's own. "Are you aware of what that means?"

“Yes, Dr. Lecter.” Will couldn’t help his gaze drift away from Hannibal as he responded, breathing deeply as he considered the idea of clinical lycanthropy. It felt so disturbingly *below* him. It irritated him to think of it but he couldn’t place why.

“I see. Why do you think you are experiencing these feelings?” Hannibal’s own gaze didn’t shift whatsoever, as with his expression. A quirk of the lips so invisible one could imagine it to be his resting expression, but Will knew it to be the usual look of curious amusement. He used to feel slightly patronised by it, as though it meant Hannibal thought of his problems as funny or just a story to listen about, but eventually came to understand it was just what the other got out of psychiatry. Obviously he wasn’t the type to do the work just out of gratification.

“I’d say it’s your job to tell me that. Not mine.” Bringing his gaze back to Hannibal, he managed to incite a slight widening of the Mona Lisa smile, causing it to abandon that description altogether. It was clearly a little more than that.

“Surely you can’t expect me to read your mind, Will, as much as I’d like to,” Hannibal gave a slight tilt of the head to showcase what would be a breathy chuckle from a normal person. Hannibal was most definitely not a normal person. “I can only articulate my conclusions once I make them, and to do that I need enough information to consolidate such a conclusion. As of now, I don’t believe I can do that for you. Though, if you don’t wish to answer my questions, you needn’t do so. Your hour is yours to use however you like.”

It was that last quip that grated at Will, and he gripped the armrests of the chair to calm himself, even going so far as to grate his teeth as he looked away to glare at a random object in the room. He seemed to satisfy himself by staring at a framed painting too intricate to see properly from where he sat. Hannibal didn’t miss any of this, eyes narrowing to take in the flickers of emotion and movement visible through Will’s demeanor. He waited silently for a response, however, keen to stay patient to encourage Will to explain himself without prodding.

“Why do you say that so openly? Kind of like you have no limits.”

“Say what, exactly?”

“That this... this *hour* is mine. As if it’s a physical object that I can do as I like with.”

“And this irritates you,” Though it should’ve been a question, Hannibal seemed to say it more as a statement, leaning back into his chair and lacing his hands together. “Why? Do you dislike the freedom, or conversely, the responsibility that it incites?”

“Yes, that. Both of them. It’s like you give me your time just to see what I’ll do with it. To see if I amuse you or do what you expect,” Will replies with a darker tone, which, since his release from the Baltimore hospital, had sparked into his tone increasingly frequently. He couldn’t help it once he’d realized the extent of Hannibal’s own darkness, and how much of a manipulator he’d been when considering Will. He didn’t even blame his own brash assumptions of Hannibal’s motives by this point, but by the raise of Lecter’s brows, it seems that he’d done something the other liked.

“I suppose this makes you feel almost like an experiment. As though I have a hypothesis, and am testing for results,” Hannibal starts, capturing Will’s feelings perfectly and causing him to glare straight at the Doctor with no holds barred. This didn’t deter him from continuing, if anything, it only spurred him on. “...However, that is not the case. I could never entirely predict you, Will. I’ve found it better to disregard ordinary assumptions concerning your behavior. Don’t think that I sit you like a rat in a cage, seeing what you will do. You’re an equal. You may not have realized a dissonance of control in the past, but you know now and I doubt you will ever allow it to happen again.” He gave a knowing smile at that, as if he was looking straight into Will’s head and contradicting his earlier statement of being unable to read his thoughts. The aforementioned had to struggle not to squirm slightly under the gaze.

Will let the silence ring out before giving a scoff just to humor Hannibal, who seemed content with that as he opted to look over Will as a whole. It used to make him uncomfortable, or, no, more so unsure of how to respond. Hannibal had been hard to read at the start before he swiftly picked up the subtle quirks that nowadays blared his intentions clear as day. This specific habit was one he was still uncertain of, but at least he wasn’t shaken by it. If anything, Will couldn’t help the flares of power that arose within him when he felt such rapt attention provided to him, especially from someone he’d assume wouldn’t dish out their time to just anyone.

“So you don’t think it’s strange I might be having delusions of being an animal, Dr. Lecter.”

“Of course not,” He responded, clearly amused by the sarcasm that practically drowned Will’s words. “This experience is exactly what you make of it. It may be a sign of your subconscious attempting to reach the surface, taking on an appearance that you have given it. That you may see some of your instincts as animalistic, so to speak.”

“So, essentially, I’ve already looked them over internally and disapproved of them.”

“The disapproval could easily be an introjection of external perspectives, as your empathy and the ability to connect with others may be clouding your own opinions. I don’t recommend suppressing fragments of your identity under the assumption of negative future connotations. It’s unlikely that denial of the self is your goal unless you’re planning to turn to altruism-- in which case, I would be interested in watching this process as it occurs.” The unexpected joke caused Will to give a breathy laugh, head tilted down but gaze set steadily upwards to keep his eyes set on Hannibal’s own. The psychiatrist seemed pleased by the view, quirking one side of his lips into a simper while tilting his head curiously.

“I’m surprised you can even make jokes. You usually laugh at things that don’t have humor attached to them by normal standards, which is your amusement in itself,” Will muses with a slight smile lingering around the corners of his mouth.

“I have my moments, it seems.”

As it did before, the lull in the verbal conversation was welcome, though there was no lull in physical communication. They continued to stare at one another, vague smiles on their face to see who would relent by breaking the eye contact. Surprisingly, Hannibal was the one who shifted his gaze first, though it irritated Will slightly to feel as though it was a test of some kind. To see if he could defy the norm. Will couldn’t help the way he felt it was necessary to prove some kind of dominance by holding his gaze, and even with Hannibal having ‘surrendered’, Will didn’t look away and instead took in the other man’s features a little closer as he leaned forward to rest his elbows on his knees.

“I apologize to interrupt your intent to study your surroundings more closely,” Hannibal started, a smug tone making it so obvious he knew Will was still looking him over and not the ‘surroundings’ he used as a replacement, “But I’m afraid your appointment has reached its end.” Will didn’t respond at first, deciding to wait out the silence as Hannibal eventually returned once more to the other’s considerably childish staring contest. Though, he was happy to indulge, and even gave a soft breath equivalent to a laugh in Hannibal’s case. Now

that he'd returned to it, Will gave a sound which was a mix of a scoff and a snicker, pulling his gaze away from the psychiatrist with much more self-control necessary than he'd thought it would require.

The reciprocal ignorance of the game made Hannibal simply smile in a sphinxy fashion, letting his gaze linger on the afterimage of Will as the aforementioned stood up instead.

"Then I guess I'll make my way out. Thank you for your time, Hannibal. I'll see you next week, 7:30."

"Yes. Hopefully no sooner."

And with that, Will swiftly left the office with Hannibal smiling softly to himself, staying still in his seat as the quiet click of the door eventually prompted him to pack up and leave the office for the night.

"No guts, no glory."

"There're guts. They're over there."

Voices belonging to Zeller and Price respectively chimed quickly one after the other. They had a friendly warmth to them even amongst the current crime scene on a cold morning. They weren't the only ones, though, as Jack-- followed by Will and Hannibal-- and the much larger group of general agents assessing the scene made up a general buzz surrounding the newly discovered body of a truck driver.

“It snowed all night. There are no tracks. You sure it was an animal?” Will forgoes any greeting, moving straight into questions as he starts taking a look of the body for himself. Hannibal also decides against a verbal greeting, though does the right thing to nod at Brian and Jimmy curtly in his usual fashion.

“Severance of the jugular and carotids, esophagus destroyed,” Zeller explains quickly. “The bite almost severed his head.”

“Evisceration was performed by large, non-retractable claws, so we’re looking at a wolf or a bear,” Price continued on from Zeller, smoothly adjusting to his investigative partner’s rapid pace.

The thought caused Will’s observation of his surroundings to cease, retreating to his head. *A wolf*. Why did that resound so deeply with him? He could imagine it, without the swing of the pendulum to ease him into the separation of the mind. The way he’d feel his quadrupedal body move in a ruthless grace, muzzle open and panting. The same hirsute sensations wrapping around him that he’d experienced back in the BSHCI, or when his teeth ached to rip at whatever it could, or how his fingernails felt ready to slice or to claw at anything considered an enemy.

He knew this wasn’t a real animal straight away, but the method of determination wasn’t his usual one.

Will vaguely heard himself say it out loud-- that it didn’t make sense for the culprit to be a wolf, or a bear for that matter. He gave some kind of reason, but his attention was being split apart as a buzzing was coming over him and making him feel like he was physically vibrating. Due to his apparent participation in the conversation, no one noticed his internal struggle, but Hannibal’s slow-moving eyes were watching him carefully. Will didn’t realize this, and as an ache overcame the tips of his fingers and saw his nails morph before his very eyes, he hitched his breath and stuffed them into his coat pockets.

“Sorry. I just, need a second,” Will stammers out at no one in particular, rushing to turn on his heel and walk away as swiftly as he could. Jack’s brows furrowed and he instantly reached out to stop his star profiler from walking right away from the scene of the body, but a surprisingly strong grasp stopped him from doing so. He turned to the source, looking at a perfectly pleasant Hannibal staring right back.

“It would be ill-advised to drag Will back to the very thing that seems to have caused him distress.” Hannibal spoke without any particular tone, a little monotone compared to usual. Knowing Hannibal, though, Jack took a second to step back from the situation, as well as remove his hand from the unnerving grip. The psychiatrist simply let his hands reconvene with one another by clasping them behind his back. It seemed he was content with the lack of a response as he nodded ever so slightly, walking away in the same direction as Will to leave Jack to grunt and tune in to Price’s ramblings about different bear species.

Will had retreated to his car, a short walk away that took around half a minute. He saw Hannibal approaching, and was at first apprehensive, purposefully looking all the way to his right and away from the other.

“You seem to be battling something, Will.”

“I’m my own worst enemy, as usual. No biggie.” Usually Hannibal was content to leave it at that-- and to disregard the self-depreciation-- and walk away, but he decided to stay beside Graham and studied him leaning against his dilapidated vehicle. Will continued to fidget with his fingers in his pockets, and gnashed his teeth together while ignoring the man by his side. He was stubborn and as much as he wanted to ask for the other to leave, he didn’t want to be the one to break the silence. It felt similar to the game of eye contact they’d had at their last session, which caused him to swallow hard. The game back then was to see who broke the eye contact first. In this case...

He heard the faint sound of Hannibal wetting his lips to speak, and so Will abruptly interrupted before the other could speak first.

“It’s not an animal,” Will blurts out, not having had anything to say anyway. As he speaks, he finally pulls his gaze to the doctor, who had an amused expression over his face, a slight smile making it obvious. The eye contact between them was loaded, and Will was sure he hadn’t been imagining the silence to be as much of a game as he’d thought. Knowing he’d ‘won’, he couldn’t help the short snicker that escaped him, staring at his feet for a second in bewilderment of his childishness. He couldn’t help it; he needed to establish some kind of power-- to show he knew what Hannibal’s games were and that he would win them.

What he wasn't aware of just yet was that winning them was exactly what Hannibal was hoping for.

"You said so earlier, and I agree with your conclusion. Though I won't accept that as a deflection, sadly," Hannibal says with a light, possibly even *playful* tone that completely contradicted his last minute addition of 'sadly'. "Would you mind showing me your hands, Will?"

That gave him pause, a jolt causing him to stiffen and whip his head towards Hannibal. Thankfully his expression was blank now, just a tilt of the head and a slight raise of his eyebrows showing the commonality of the situation. Will would've usually done as asked even if in a gruffly manner, but in this case, he couldn't help the anxiety pricking at his heart and causing it to stutter in rhythm. There was something physically wrong with him and he didn't want to let Hannibal decide what the unknown was before he decided it himself. He couldn't let the other gain that power over him.

"No."

"No?"

Will didn't repeat himself.

"I remember we discussed the possibility of your recent intrusive thoughts to be due to a case of lycanthropy. I feel it to be likely that this display is following that, as it would seem on course considering the mention of a wolf." As much as he hated to admit it, Hannibal's action of naming the unknown for Will was comforting, and made him feel a little more confident. Lycanthropy... that meant it was in his head. It wasn't a physical issue, it was just something that made it feel that way, yet as Will took his hands out of his pockets with a tremble, he paled. Spiky fingernails and a sheen of light hair crawled out from under his sleeve, most prominent on the back of his hand, and he let out a panicked sound before stuffing them back where they were previously. His nostrils flared as he breathed rapidly, staring at Hannibal hopelessly and hoping for some kind of denial of what he just saw.

Hannibal didn't reply right away, and the mere second of pause caused Will to whimper pathetically before squeezing his eyes shut. A wave of raw anxiety came over him, and he

knew exactly what it reminded him of: his nightmarish panic attack of claws and fangs and fur and that damned 6-stroke symbol all the way back from his time in the BSHCI.

The mere thought caused the feelings to heighten, and against his own will, took his unfamiliar hand out to steady himself against his car.

“I-I need to leave, now-- Can you let Jack know I’m going home,” Will rushes out with deep breaths, scrambling to open the door he was leaning on to get inside and drive the fuck out of there. It was to no avail as Hannibal moved quickly to stop him.

“You are clearly in no condition to drive home. You look on the verge of a panic attack. I cannot let you drive in that state, Will. Absolutely not,” Hannibal instantly worsened the situation by cutting off the easy exit, but Will wasn’t able to think past the painful fog in his head and simply looked at the doctor for help with glassy eyes. A small laugh in the form of a vague breath escaped Hannibal as he took in Will’s rapidly deteriorating capability of keeping himself together, and by placing a firm hand on his shoulder, led him towards his black Bentley.

“H-Home. Hannibal, I need to go home, to the dogs,” Will heaves out, leaning into the touch for stability as they walk the short distance to the car.

“I can take you home, yes. I will call Jack in the car for you to let him know,” Hannibal responds simply, taking the following nod from Will as all the confirmation needed before unlocking his car and carefully letting the man drop into the passenger seat with a painful groan. Hannibal moved briskly to get into the driver’s seat and had the car engine rumble to life, flicking on the heated seats and turning up the temperature to combat the slight chill of the car.

Soft, hitched breaths were all that Hannibal heard from Will for the entire ride, his passenger’s eyes shut as tightly as he could and bent over with his head on his knees. He’d asked Will if he was alright at some point during the journey, but there was no response-- not even a shake of the head. Though he was hoping for a chance to gain more insight from Will as to what was going on in his mind at the time, he didn’t want to make all his patience worth nothing by prodding too hard and making a mistake, so he patiently decided to give Will a deserved break and to collect whatever thoughts were flying around him in the silence.

They'd eventually reached Will's house, and it seemed to trigger a flight response in him, dizzily pulling his head up and trying to get out of the car in a wobbly fashion. Hannibal simply watched curiously, as Will hadn't even acknowledged him for the entire ride and it seemed he might not be registering his presence.

"Will, your seatbelt--" Hannibal eventually spoke up and leaned across the center console to unfasten Will's seatbelt but was taken aback by a literal snarl, clearly animalistic in nature and showcasing unusually sharp teeth. Even his eyes seemed different, the normally pure stormy blue of his irises speckled with gold, a purity paradoxically acting as an impurity amongst the usual colour. Hannibal supposed it would be more akin to fool's gold, then. It caused him to wonder if the fool in those eyes were reflecting Hannibal or were tinting Will's vision.

Either way, he pulled back and Will fumbled with sharp fingers to press the large red button of the seatbelt contraption and practically fling himself out onto the earthy floor, grunting and clearly trying to suppress other sounds of pain and confusion. Hannibal moved to unfasten his own seatbelt, but to his surprise, found Will heaving himself up to lean on the side of the car and glare blearily at the familiar driver.

"Don't... get out," Will bit out, one hand gripping the car hard enough to make his knuckles go white, and the other hand, banging the side of his head in a steady rhythm. "Leave. Drive away, Hannibal."

"You can't expect me to leave you acting as such. You seem delirious, Will--"

"I don't expect you to, I'm t-telling you to," He says with a forced, wobbly grin, trying to regain a fragment of his usual demeanor before heaving in some air and narrowing his eyes at Hannibal as best as he could manage. "I know there's s--... something up with you, Dr. Lecter..." Will manages his words somehow, intertwined with gasps for air and grunts. "I don't w-want you 'round... for now. Go," He barks out, taking a shaky step away from the car and slamming the door shut, frantically gesturing for Hannibal to drive away. "Leave!" He yells out, reiterating the message.

It was only 9 or so in the morning, and Hannibal pursed his lips as he contemplated a response. He didn't have very long though, as Will seemed to be growing irrationally angry over the lack of movement.

“I’m going to visit you early tomorrow morning, and you’re going to rest for today. Is that okay, Will?” Hannibal asks smoothly even with Will’s attempts at animalistic intimidation and unpredictable behavior, speaking through the wound-down window.

He got a nod in response, and that was all he needed. Leaning back, he shifted in his seat, and regarded Will with one last look.

Those stormy eyes speckled with fool’s gold seemed more foolish than before, and the amusing observation made Hannibal smile ever so slightly. The twitchy, tensed expression on Will’s face gave no indication of processing the smile, and with that, Hannibal drove the car in reverse before driving away, leaving an aching and panting Will to stumble over to his door and deal with whatever the fuck was going on with his body.

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